

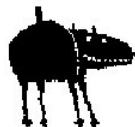
Detroit Poems

# *Detroit Poems*

*By Doug Tanoury*



FUNKY DOG PUBLISHING



# **Detroit Poems**

Funky Dog Publishing



Detroit, Michigan USA



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## Detroit Poems

A poet's hope: to be,  
like some valley cheese,  
local, but prized elsewhere.

*W. H. Auden (1907 - 1973), Collected Poems*

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## Detroit Poems

### Winter Pears

On a wooden swing hanging  
From the highest bough  
Of his backyard pear tree  
We learned to fly at the  
Speed of dreams on summer  
Afternoons, leaning back  
And gripping rusted  
Chains and looking far up  
Into thick foliage that hid  
The dark limbs that held us.

From the tall tree that grew  
Small winter pears  
I'd fly with him across the  
Summers and briefly  
Forget for a moment  
My parent's marriage,  
The family finances,  
My sister's sickness.  
In quick motion sweeping us  
Upward, we learned to fly.

Before I knew of fallen fruit  
Or how spring winds  
Waste pear blossoms,  
I knew him. He flew  
Unfettered and without  
Cares where dreams  
Grew slow like winter pears  
On the highest branches  
To ripen and fall only  
In late summer.

Today, under a pear tree  
Drooping with fruit  
I dreamt him here.

## Detroit Poems

### Scott Fountain

There is a renaissance fountain  
Of white Italian marble  
In a city park. On occasion  
I still go there, for it holds  
The magic of my childhood.  
My grandfather and I would visit it  
On summer afternoons.  
He would always open  
His pocket change holder,  
In slow motion and pick  
Out a coin for me to toss  
In the water with my wish.  
In the sounds of the  
Streams spraying upward,  
In the glint of silver coins through  
The water, I think of him.

There is a renaissance fountain  
Of white Italian marble,  
That my grandfather  
And I would visit,  
That holds all my old wishes,  
The heavy heartfelt ones  
That sink swiftly in the turbid  
Waters and lie invisible  
On colored tile bottom  
Grown over with algae.  
They remain unseen and  
Waiting, as requests from  
The devout sometimes await  
God's granting. Wishes  
Are secular prayers.  
I know this, for whenever  
I hold a Mercury dime or  
Indian-head nickel  
I wish he were here.

## Detroit Poems

### Conversation With Grandma

She is so beautiful  
When she talks to her grandma,  
Sitting on a corner edge  
Of the hospital bed  
As she listens intently  
To grandma's broken  
English, nodding her head  
At certain statements  
Which causes her hair tied  
In a pony tail to wag  
Cutely up and down,  
Sometimes side to side, and  
Sometimes it spirals in circles,  
Some of them round,  
Some more elliptical.

She is so beautiful  
When she talks to her grandma,  
Sitting on the bed absorbed  
In conversation, with animated hair  
Tied back in an expressive tail and  
Like a conductor's baton it  
Seems to set and moderate  
The pace of conversation,  
And at that moment I want only  
To study all the aspects of  
Pony-tail physics,  
To steep myself in the  
Small details of the science  
Of silent motion  
That accompanies and punctuates  
A conversation with grandma.

## Detroit Poems

### Finches

The other morning  
I saw two finches mating  
On a slender ledge  
Under my porch awning.

They were small like  
Two espresso cups  
Stacked two high,  
One inside the other.

And I imagine  
Their sexual parts  
To be as tiny and fine  
As Swiss movements.

They will nest  
Behind the eaves, and  
Soon I will hear chirping  
From unexpected places.



## Detroit Poems

### August

Late on these August nights,  
I sit on my front porch  
Unable to sleep,  
And watch the stars,  
But mostly I watch  
The wind in the trees.  
There is an elm a few doors down  
That has branched out  
Around the street lamp  
So that the leaves glow  
Translucent green in the night.  
The wind moving branches  
And leaves making it look  
Like a carved jade sculpture  
Come to life.

And I think that this has been  
The summer of cut jade,  
I have never seen grass so deeply green,  
Or trees more ornate in their foliage,  
And the sky has never been painted in  
Finer shades of skyborn blues.  
And I think too,  
That this is what Icarus saw  
And felt just before . . .  
So if my wings fail now,  
Let me fall, for I have kissed the sky  
As if it were a holy icon  
And filled my lungs with the  
Pure whiteness of clouds, so  
If I fall there will be no splash,  
No sound except a sigh lifted  
Airborne by the waves.

## Detroit Poems

### Helen

I sit on top of the hill  
At Balduck park and  
Think of you,  
Trying to remember  
The way your hair caught  
The light of August sunsets,  
How you leaned against  
A lamppost and  
Lifted a bottle of Ripple  
To your lips.  
I know your waiting for me  
Patiently  
And all the old gang too,  
Burning sandalwood incense  
And playing old rock albums,  
Dancing under stroboscopic  
Lights with tambourine  
And castanets, braless and  
Barefoot, your long hair  
Flying wild and free.  
I know your waiting for me,  
Helen,  
As I sit on top of the hill  
At Balduck park and  
Turn sixteen again.

## Detroit Poems

### Maps

Sister Antonina's map  
Of the world worked  
Like a large window shade  
That pulled down  
And went up noisily  
In true window shade fashion,  
Its roller turning made the sound  
Of a morning dove cooing, and  
The map's fabric winding up  
Were wings flapping.  
I remember France was green,  
The Brest jutting out toward England  
And the North Atlantic.  
Italy was faded terra cotta, almost a pink,  
Against a deep blue Adriatic.

In fourth grade  
At Nativity of Our Lord school,  
I sat in the front desk  
Where I memorized  
The shapes of continents and countries.  
When I passed the map  
Going to lunch or returning from recess  
I would run my hand  
Across the Mediterranean  
To feel the texture of the fabric  
And hear the tum-tum sound  
Of my fingers drumming  
Against Greece and the Aegean.  
Occasionally, on toetips and stretching  
I could brush a finger  
Along St. Bernard's Pass.

I was always sad to hear  
The morning dove calling  
And wings flapping  
As the world retracted  
To reveal arithmetic problems  
Or spelling assignments  
On the blackboard  
Written in Sister Antonina's  
Precise penmanship.  
For reasons that mystify me still,  
I failed the fourth grade,

## **Detroit Poems**

Although I stuck my hands  
Into every southern sea,  
And I touched Athens,  
And I touched Rome,  
And something in them  
Touched me.

## **Detroit Poems**

### **A Day In May**

I stood in an artist's loft under a skylight  
Showered in sunshine along with tropical  
Plants and exotic trees in large earthen pots

Artwork on each wall oils and reliefs  
Half sculptured half painted and framed in  
Each window a sky Monet would paint

Floating over a bleak landscape of  
Neglected buildings and weed-grown lots  
Where trees of heaven lend a tropical look

Like one of Rousseau's jungle scenes verdant  
And resplendent in green that grow to fill  
The vacant lots between burned out buildings.

## Detroit Poems

### St. Joseph's

There is a gothic church  
With a tall and slender spire  
In the old section of the city,  
That seems to float  
In lighter than air fashion  
Toward heaven as if the  
Stones themselves are  
Moving toward God.  
I have never been inside,  
But each time I pass  
I say to myself that one  
Day I will stop to say  
A prayer there. I have  
Been promising this prayer  
For many years.

There is a gothic church  
With a tall and slender spire  
That is a baroque concerto  
Frozen in stone and mortar.  
I must go there one day,  
Walk through the center portal  
Under the large rose window,  
Hearing my footsteps on the  
Tiled floor of the nave echoing  
From vaulted ceilings,  
Enter a pew near the altar  
And kneeling, hands folded,  
Head bowed, let my prayers  
Float like stones.

## **Detroit Poems**

### **More Finches**

On a narrow ledge  
Under the front porch  
Awning

Families of finches  
Have built three  
Nests

Sloppy and unkempt  
With tangled strands  
Blowing

This way and that  
Like three women in a  
Convertible

Driving on the Interstate  
With the top down on a  
June afternoon

## Detroit Poems

### Bronze Horseman

Ever since childhood, I could never  
Pass you without giving a look,  
An old war hero on a horse, hat  
Pulled low over your eyes, saber  
Dangling at your side, not a  
Typical equestrian frozen in some  
Triumphant pose, but looking sleepy  
And slow, slouching slightly in the  
Saddle, tired like a real man,  
Tired of the cars whistling past like  
Artillery fire, brakes screeching like  
Rebel war cries.

No one stops in the middle of the  
Intersection to read your name on  
The granite monument; no one knows  
What you've done, the sacrifice you've  
Made, no one cares; will you sit  
Forever, staring down at lesser men,  
Their petty squabbles about right of way  
And dented fenders?

Will you remain unmoved, transfixed as  
The dead you've looked on scattered across  
The battlefield? Come on, spur your mount,  
Let's see you ride, turn the heads of the  
Picnickers with the clapping of brazen hoofs  
Slapping the asphalt. Fly across the bridge,  
Slapping your horse with your hat,  
Speed off this island.

Feel the sun, the wind flowing through your  
Hair as you ride, come on, let's hear a real  
Yankee "WHOO!" and hear your saber growl as  
It's pulled from its sheath; come alive with  
Rage like Pushkin's statue of Peter The Great,  
Ride, ride like a madman down East Grand  
Boulevard, past the rows of Victorian Mansions  
With old white-haired men sitting on porches,  
Bellowing from your belly: "WHOO! WHOO!"

Down the streets lined with boarded-up factories,  
Bars and auto parts stores, stomp some common  
Folks, cut some non-combatants down, make that



## **Detroit Poems**

Old saber sing, General, then they'll know your name;  
You've got to kill some civilians to be remembered.

## Detroit Poems

### Latin Hymns

We share a hymnal at Sunday Mass  
Shoulders rubbing, heads leaning  
Together toward each other

Our eyes meet in *Panis Angelicus*  
I touch her bare arm in *Jubilate Domino*  
We smile through Latin hymns

And the slow dour notes of the organ  
Lighten for a moment with the sound  
Of her voice singing soft and fragile

God the almighty lives at  
That instant in the sweetness  
Of words sung in her whisper

And I am filled with prayers of thanksgiving  
For that Eve and this Adam  
In the Eden of touch

## Detroit Poems

### Disembodied

On nights when I'm away from her,  
I often think that this is what  
It must be like to be dead,  
To be separated by physical laws  
So far reaching and fundamental  
That space and time both conspire  
To make touch a memory and  
The movement of her body  
A phantom that passes only  
In my mind.

On nights when I'm away from her,  
I often wonder if I have passed away.  
It feels as if I am a ghost  
With a past I cannot relive  
And longings I cannot satisfy now,  
Separated by an uncrossable gulf  
From her and the sound  
Of her slippers soughing  
Across the hallway floor.

## Detroit Poems

### Feeding Ducks

*For Matt*

We fed ducks  
Together  
The day before  
Yesterday

In the park  
By the lake  
Remember  
There were gulls

Hovering  
Above our heads  
As we stood  
Surrounded

By the sounds  
Encircled  
By their calls  
The day before

Yesterday  
In the park  
Together  
We fed ducks

## Detroit Poems

### Photograph

*For Stacey*

We often walk in summer  
To where the oak trees grow  
And gather still green acorns  
Shaken off in a storm.  
I fill my pockets.  
She fills her purse,  
And we take them home  
To plant in the front yard.

Your father is a poet,  
All the better to love you my dear,  
The same man who chides you  
To chew with your mouth closed  
At the dinner table, and taught you  
To skip stones as we walked a beach  
Along Lake Michigan  
In late summer.

She will grow into a woman  
Of deep caring, and will remember  
Her purse filled with acorns  
On summer afternoons  
And our plantings  
That never brought an oak,  
But were never intended to do  
More than teach.

Your father is a poet documenting love,  
So years from now when you  
Chew your food like a lady,  
This poem will be a 35MM glossy print  
On high grade paper,  
Of father and daughter  
On an August afternoon,  
Skipping stones at the beach.

## Detroit Poems

### Six Sonatas

*Metaphors for violin, flute, cello and harpsichord*

We sat in the balcony at First Methodist  
Up where ornate oak trusses span the ceiling,  
And as the musicians tune, one at a time,  
The sound of their instruments drifts up and  
I think I have chosen a seated nearer to God.

A man in tails and four women in black dresses  
Play Telemann and as the music starts  
I think they should all be wearing white  
On the crimson carpet of the altar  
Beneath the red glow of sanctuary light.

The arm holding the bow of the  
Baroque violin is the white wing  
Of a large sea bird moving slow  
And graceful as it floats suspended  
On currents of unseen air.

A tall woman plays a wooden flute  
Her fingers moving like leaves in the wind.  
When she plays solo, her pausing a moment  
And taking soft breaths is the sound of  
Front doors opening on a January morning.

The blonde playing cello seems so fair  
Her face and arms marbled white  
Under the lights her bare shoulders  
Meet the black fabric of her dress  
As snow drifts across an asphalt road.

A slight woman plays violoncello.  
Her tiny hands and thin fingers  
Moving on the strings like the small crabs  
That walk sideways at the seashore  
With slow and tentative steps.

The man in tails plays harpsichord  
It whispers water sounds that rivers make  
Flowing around bends, the music  
Somewhat muffled, strums like rain  
Falling on a metal awning.

## **Detroit Poems**

### **Blushing Sunrise**

As in Homer's Iliad  
Dawn is a golden haired girl,  
Painting the sky over the far  
Eastside

Above wood frame homes  
Needing gutters and new roofs  
As a boy watches  
Alone

At the sunrise window  
Of his bedroom as daylight  
Creeps above the elms on  
Holcomb street.

## Detroit Poems

### My House And Shadows

A black and white photograph  
Of the house I grew up in hangs  
Framed on my living room wall

It stands alight in winter sun  
A series of rectangles topped  
With gable triangles of the roof

I stare into darkened windows  
Where I once gazed onto photo  
Perfect afternoons filled with light

The front porch is a box held up  
By two white pillars and my  
Grandfather's swing is empty now

It looks as if no one is home but  
I alone looking at this landscape  
And plain facade of red bricks

Windows some dark and others  
White with shades drawn against  
The brightness of late afternoon

As the sun sets behind the bar and  
Bowling alley across Gratiot Avenue  
A lone street lamp casts its silhouette

On Rohns street the shadows are long  
Stretched into just before sunset length  
In front of and on the house I grew up in



## Detroit Poems

### Detroit River

Sitting on the  
Breakwater  
Watching the waves  
Studying  
Their repeated motion

I miss the  
Fisherman  
Whitecaps make me  
Remember  
Him gently now  
And days fishing

Endlessly  
In a boat  
Together  
By buoy #3  
Watching the waves

Studying  
Their repeated motion  
Sitting on the  
Breakwater

## Detroit Poems

### My House In Twilight

A black and white photograph  
Of the house I grew up in hangs  
On my living room wall

Above an end table lamp and  
On evenings when the only light  
Is across the room

The house looks as it did in the  
Summer twilight as the sunset  
Behind the bowling alley

And I sat on the wide gray steps  
Of the front porch watching the  
Traffic on Gratiot Avenue

White eaves follow the gables  
And angle to heaven balancing  
The front porch boxiness

I look at the photo often as I pass  
On my way to the kitchen or  
Toward my front door

Always looking for some sigh  
Of movement as if the elms  
In the distance will sway

Or a car turn into traffic perhaps  
The wooden storm door swing open  
Or a window shade raise

Maybe my grandfather taking  
His seat on the front porch swing  
Would signal normalcy

And I could know those within  
Are well as only a shadow passing  
A window would tell me

Or a boy sitting on wide gray steps  
In a soft pink sunset light staring  
Bored into passing traffic

## Detroit Poems

### Felix Culpa

I walk through an open-air market  
On Saturday mornings in the Spring,  
As I did with my grandparents as a boy,  
And with my father in years before, but now  
I hold her hand as we cut a path through  
The crowds past stalls where farmers,  
And flower peddlers bark goods and prices  
With voices echoing from a cathedral-like  
Clerestory and high ceiling.

The market is a long awning with red brick  
Entrance arches in the Roman style,  
Creating a patchwork of light and shadow.  
We steal large purple grapes to feed each other,  
And pick strawberries as big as apples from  
Cardboard flats and hold them up to each  
Other's mouth tempting one sinful bite.  
I whisper chewing stolen fruit: "Felix Culpa"  
She laughs and pushes another grape in my mouth.

## Detroit Poems

### My House In Winter

A black and white photograph of the house  
I grew up in hangs on my living room wall  
Spotlighted by an end table lamp  
I look at it often as I pass noting the lights  
And darks the whites and blacks the  
Lines and shapes that make the facade  
The absence of all people seems somehow  
Fitting in a picture populated by shadows  
In a landscape of captured stillness  
The house alone stands the singular subject  
Of this work in the sunshine of a clear  
Winter afternoon filling the photo

Wide gray wooden steps where I would  
Sit on summer days waiting always  
Waiting for adulthood and my own life  
Watching and listening to the traffic  
Idling on Gratiot Avenue in rush hour  
Lines slowly edging uptown  
If the picture had been taken in summer  
Four O'clock blooms would still be closed  
But the Rose of Sharon would be open  
The grass would be tall and need cutting  
And the vines crawling up the garage

Would cloak the red brick in grapeleaves  
But it is winter in the photograph and  
The elms on Holcomb street stand  
Without leaves and there are no flowers  
Or people and the only color is on the  
Gray steps where I would sit in summer  
Picking blossoms in late afternoon  
Shadows waiting to be grown so that  
Childhood would be a landscape to only  
Look back on in the starkness of winter  
Where no one is seen and nothing grows

## Detroit Poems

### Folded Tent

*A Mosaic*

I remember my bedroom window always open  
on summer days, carrying the crackling music from  
my RCA Victrola out into the alley and beyond,  
blaring at full volume for hours until I grew  
tired of cranking it, leaning out my window  
after sunset to shoot rats, clutching a BB pistol  
with both hands, holding my breathe, cutting them  
in the sights, gently squeezing the trigger and watching  
them scramble off wounded to die in the twilight.

My bedroom window always open on summer nights,  
the tarnished light from a nearby street lamp  
shining dimly into my room, falling asleep to the  
occasional sound of footsteps crunching down the alley  
on chips of glass, and the constant roar of traffic  
speeding down Gratiot Avenue.

I remember my room, tapping out my first misspelled  
words on a Remington Noiseless, reading science fiction  
and dreaming of Mary Ellen from my seventh grade class,  
my thoughts of her always steaming in sin, on a  
thousand strange and exotic worlds, in the cold black  
emptiness of space, Mary Ellen was at my side, writing  
her name: MARY ELLEN, MY STAR GIRL, surrounded by  
arrow pierced planets on the wall behind the door  
where it couldn't be seen, and being scared at night,  
not daring to get up for a glass of water, pulling the  
covers over my head and listening to the strange noises  
the house made in the middle of the night.

I remember the science fiction paperbacks stacked  
on the dresser and hard pornography piled underneath  
my bed, squeezing pimples in the dresser mirror,  
winking at my own reflection every time I passed it,  
reading Dostoevsky and dreaming of highschool  
cheerleaders, locking myself in to smoke cigarettes  
and drink red Italian wine.

## Detroit Poems

I remember the altar in the corner of the dining room, crowded with statues: St. Anne, St. Joseph, St. Francis and Anthony, the Sacred Heart and Blessed Mother standing among the yellowing palms from the last Palm Sunday and the flower picked from the garden, the Infant of Prague standing in the center of the altar surround by the smaller statues and flowers, wearing new robes every month, robes of purple and red velvet, satin, silk, and gold lace. I was always envious, for he was the best-dressed member of the household.

I remember portraits of Arabs in colorful robes, long muskets slung over their shoulders, and side arms in drooping holsters at their hips, sitting in carved wooden frames in the attic, pictures that were dusty dreams from distant times and far off places, far from the grime and noise of a city slum.

I look across the empty field that holds my past, and watch the tall grass swaying in the wind. I walk through the alley, looking up into the empty air, to the place where my bedroom window should be, imagining I hear the old Victrola crackling out a song by Dinah Shore, the music drifting down to me standing in the alley, but all I hear is the roar of rush hour traffic speeding down Gratiot Avenue.

## Detroit Poems

### Run Softly

I run through the woods  
On a path along the river,  
Under the December sky  
That moves from dark gray  
To gathering deep purple,  
Where trees and snow  
Turn the landscape into  
A charcoal and chalk sketch.

I remember the Frost I learned  
As a boy, and mark his meter  
With my footfalls as I run:  
“Whose---woods---are---these---  
I---think---I---know---”  
Made by the sandpaper sound  
Of my sneakers on the asphalt  
With a dusting of snow.

## Detroit Poems

### Time Piece

Yes, I often stand on the front porch  
Of an old Victorian house that long  
Ago coughed its last breath in a rising  
Cloud of pale red dust, to the choking  
Noise of walls collapsing, plaster  
Ripping, timbers cracking, wrecking ball  
Swinging like a black pendulum, as  
Heaving groans fade into the dull  
Clunk-clickity of brick on brick, and  
The tick-tock sounds of settling debris.

Yes, I often stand there, hand tugging  
On the handle, fist pounding on the  
Battered wooden door that frames a  
Tattered screen, listening for the  
Rattle of her rosary and the yak-yak  
Of telltale floorboards, as I watch  
Her silhouette moving through the  
Darkened rooms, a shadow never stepping  
Near the light, never moving toward  
The door.

I often stand there refusing to leave,  
Knowing that time is as irreversible  
As death, yet defying both, ignoring  
The down-in-the-ground-grown-over-with  
Grass finality of rigamortized facts,  
Knowing in the end I'll win, one day  
I'll sprint up the steps, taking two  
At a time, the way I used to, and  
The door will swing open, she'll  
Come out, and we'll sit in the sun  
On the front porch steps

Forever.



## Detroit Poems

### My House Once Again

There is a black and white photograph  
Of the house I grew up in hanging on  
My living room wall above a table lamp

I look at it often drinking my morning coffee  
My eyes draw to every window and a gray  
Sky wedged between the gables of the roof

The red brick siding is accented by drawn white  
Window shades framed like stretched canvas  
Awaiting a painter's brush and knife

I am moved always by the humbleness of  
The paint peeling from the eaves and the stark  
Facade highlighted by front porch and awning

The wide steps that lead up to the weathered  
Wooden storm door recessed in the awning  
Shadows and I know I took the photo as a boy

From across the street so I could remember  
In years away and be able to look back always  
And not forget what it was and what is was not

What I am and what I am not what they were  
And what they were not where I am and where  
They have gone and of journeys ended and begun

## Detroit Poems

### My House Repeated

There is a photograph of the house  
I grew up in hanging on the wall in  
My living room that I took as a child

I took it so as to not forget what it  
Looked like and so that when grown  
I could look back and know

The future is now and I look at it often  
And remember the red brick and white  
Wood of the facade and look in the door

And gaze into the windows some dark  
Others white shades drawn blinds closed  
Everyone is inside on a winter afternoon

But me who has gone across the street  
And fit the entire house into my lens  
From basement windows to the chimney

As gables poke into a black and white  
Sky and elms on Holcomb street look  
Pencil sketched onto a white paper

I return to the house often in my dreams  
Where it is dark and dangerous and no  
Light enters inside and no one is ever home

Awake and asleep the house is a place I love  
And hate the rooms and furniture always  
The inescapable and grayscale part of me

## Detroit Poems

### The Good-bye Dawn

She awoke to a beautiful morning,  
She was old and an expert on such things  
Having seen her share,  
The kind of morning that rattles the years  
Like prayer beads,  
The kind that shakes the branches of the mind  
Loosening memories of Lebanese mountains  
Pounding a Mediterranean sky.

It was a toast, eggs and bacon morning,  
A sun soaked September morning,  
The kind that stays with you,  
Snoozing through the afternoon and  
Snoring through the evening.

What a morning to leave  
Eggs and bacon cold on  
The kitchen table, to walk out into  
The sun soaked streets  
Without opening the door  
Without saying good-bye.

So, good-bye to you,  
To you who grew like  
A cedar among the pines,  
To you who's words glistened like  
A lotus pond of oriental poems,  
To you who made fantasy flower  
And belief bloom,  
To you who slept the nights  
With rosaries and creaking bones,  
All poems lead to you.

## **Detroit Poems**

### **A Black And White Photograph**

There is a black and white photograph  
Of the house I grew up in hanging on  
The wall

Of my living room lit by a lamp on  
The end table that shines a summer light  
That seems

To glisten on the windows that I  
So desperately search for face or figure  
But finding

Them all dark and the front porch  
Swing empty my eyes rise to  
Gables adding

Geometry to a sky in a time there  
Was no order only the willy nilly  
Reaching and

Retraction of feelings as distant as the  
Elms on Holcomb Street faint in the  
Photo's background

## Detroit Poems

### My House Revisited

The house I grew up in is centered  
In a black and white  
Photograph on my living room wall

It moves me each time my gaze passes  
over it like an  
Impressionist landscape Pissarro would paint

The light and shadow patterned across  
The image tells  
A time in late afternoon the weather clear

My father's two-tone Chevy is in the street  
And my uncle's  
White Buick is in the alley yet no one is seen

And I would think no one is home except for  
The front door is open  
A wooden storm door alone holds out winter

The house stands stark like a Doric column  
Unadorned yet monumental  
It's facade simple and cut by many windows

Sometimes it seems lifelike to me as if the  
Wooden storm door  
Could swing open at camera shutter speed

Or my father's red and white Chevy could  
Pull from the curb  
And drive off into traffic on Gratiot Avenue

It is the magic of place and the power of  
Persons that holds  
My eyes searching for movement in stillness

Scanning the horizon hazed in distance  
For the bending  
And swaying of the elms in the winds

## Detroit Poems

### My House Demolished

The house I grew up in is gone  
Demolished and the cast iron  
Radiators in each room sold as scrap

My hand recalls the feel of the banister  
My ear the squawk of each step  
My eye the hues of sunlit stained glass

The oak doors and windows  
Sold as architectural antiques  
The red bricks sold by weight

My grandfather napping in his armchair  
My grandmother working in the kitchen  
Me staring at the plain white ceiling

Quiet neglect and abandonment  
Replaced by bursting diesel of a  
Bulldozer and whacks of wrecking balls

The smell of my grandfather's chair  
And my grandmother's cooking and  
My uncle's dog barking in the yard

Brick timber glass and plaster debris  
Strewn and piled across the lot where  
A plum tree still stands as sole survivor

My Grandfather's coughs my grandmother's  
Quiet laughter and through an open  
Window the smell of lilacs in early June

Stained glass hues range over storefronts  
Across the street as sunset forms a study  
In blue on the west side of Gratiot Avenue

## Detroit Poems

### My House Again

There is a black and white photograph  
Of the house I grew up in  
Hanging on my living room wall

The wide gray steps that lead up  
To the white-railed porch  
And weathered wooden storm door

I look at it often always hoping to find  
Someone on the front porch  
Swing or standing in the doorway

I have rendered that facade again  
And once again like an  
Impressionist haystack in a landscape

Repeating itself only in different color  
And in different light  
Reoccurring dream like it replays itself

Until the message is understood or  
Fully explored obsessions  
Are messenger angels sent from God

I see going up the first concrete step  
Before the gray ones  
Is also the last step going down

Has on going up a crack on the right and  
On the left coming down  
That I saw always coming and going

And I see now in my rendering and  
Rerendering as I am touched  
Again and once again in my going up

And in my coming down and in my  
Dreams and in my art and  
In my waking and in my sleeping

In my loving and in my hating those  
Same gray steps that are  
The start of my journey and the end

## Detroit Poems

### My House And Lines

There is a black and white photograph  
Of the house I grew up in hanging matted  
In a frame in my living room above a lamp

The gabled geometry of the roof and the  
Sharp angles of the facade are classical  
Like a Greek temple of white marble

The wooden pillars holding up the  
Front porch awning look like Ionic  
Columns in a landscape of straight lines

Horizontals and verticals blend on a  
Winter afternoon without color and elms  
On Holcomb street stand without leaves

Light and shadow paint the shade drawn  
Windows and plain red brick to prospective  
And depth giving illusion to the past

Solitary and monolithic it is as close as  
I can get to the child who has turned  
Boredom and lens on this scene years back

I see my eyes in the windows and  
My shape at the door up the wide  
Temple steps between white columns



## Detroit Poems

### Lake St. Clair

The sun hangs  
Tangerine  
Over a blue  
Silhouette  
Of gathering clouds  
As lake freighters  
Navigate  
The narrow channel  
Signaling  
With steam whistles  
Their orange hulls  
Teetering  
On a fuzzy  
Horizon  
Where color blends  
Over the blue  
Silhouette  
Of gathering clouds  
The sun hangs  
Tangerine

## Detroit Poems

### Promise

*For Mary*

The priest read the gospel and we stood  
Together in the pew listening to the  
Story of the widow who married seven brothers  
And the riddle put to Jesus:

"In the resurrection, Master, whose wife  
will she be?"

And Jesus answered "No one's wife."  
For in the afterlife you become  
Like angels. And I thought  
"Pure Spirit" as I touched her  
Standing next to me,  
"Without body or gender,  
Consciousness without sex"

We looked at each other,  
Still standing,  
She smiled and I smiled back,  
No longer hearing the priest read,  
I leaned to whisper,  
Smelling her hair  
As I moved my lips  
Toward her ear:

"In the resurrection, I'll be  
Your husband still . . .  
I promise."

## Detroit Poems

### My House

There is a black and white photograph  
Of the house I grew up in  
Hanging on my living room wall

It is not known who took the picture  
But I think I did it standing behind  
The fire hydrant across the street

The Rose of Sharon bushes are bare of  
Leaves and blossoms and winter elms  
On Holcomb street spiderweb the sky

A shadow from a street lamp is cast  
In the street says it is late on a  
Winter afternoon and it's a weekend

For my father's red and white Chevy is  
Parked in the street and my uncle's  
Buick convertible is parked in the alley

The blinds in the windows are closed  
Against the sunlight and my grandfather's  
Front porch swing is oddly empty

Everyone is gone and the house stands  
Dream like in afternoon light with faded  
And peeling paint captured in a picture

## Detroit Poems

### The House on Rohns

I return to the house on Rohns  
In my dreams and find that it  
Surrounds a garden courtyard that was  
Never there in waking but that somehow  
In my dream memories always was

Looking southward on bright sunlight  
Shining on grass long and lush I stand  
At a window that was never there  
But exists only in the temporal soupiness  
Of a dreamer's homecoming

She stands with me looking at it  
And on waking I tell her so  
She pulls the door to enter  
But only I know the idiosyncratic  
Push and pull movements that open dream doors

And I lead holding her hand  
Into the sunlight bright on us and the  
Grass that whispers somewhere between  
Knee and ankle as we walk surrounded by the  
Weathered red brickwork of a dream

## Detroit Poems

### About Doug Tanoury



Doug Tanoury is primarily a poet of the Internet with the majority of his work never leaving electronic form. His verse can be read at electronic magazines and journals across the world. Collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be found at Funky Dog Publishing <http://www.funkydoggpublishing.com> and Athens Avenue <http://mywebpages.comcast.net/dtanoury1/Athens/index.htm>

This and other ebook collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be read and downloaded at: <http://home.comcast.net/~dtanoury1/Tanoury.html>

Doug grew up in Detroit, Michigan and still lives in the area. Detroit personal landmarks often serve as the subject matter for his poetry. The city becomes both the setting and subject for most of Doug's work.

Doug Tanoury credits his 7th grade poetry anthology from Sister Debra's English class, *Reflections On A Gift Of Watermelon Pickle And Other Modern Verse*, (Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders and Hugh Smith, (c) 1966 by Scott Foresman & Company) as exerting the greatest influence on his work. He still keeps a copy of it at his writing desk.